

IN THE
VESTIBULE LIMITED
BY
BRANDER MATTHEWS



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IN THE VESTIBULE LIMITED

BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS

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NEW YORK
HARPER AND BROTHERS
1892

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TO

THE AUTHOR OF

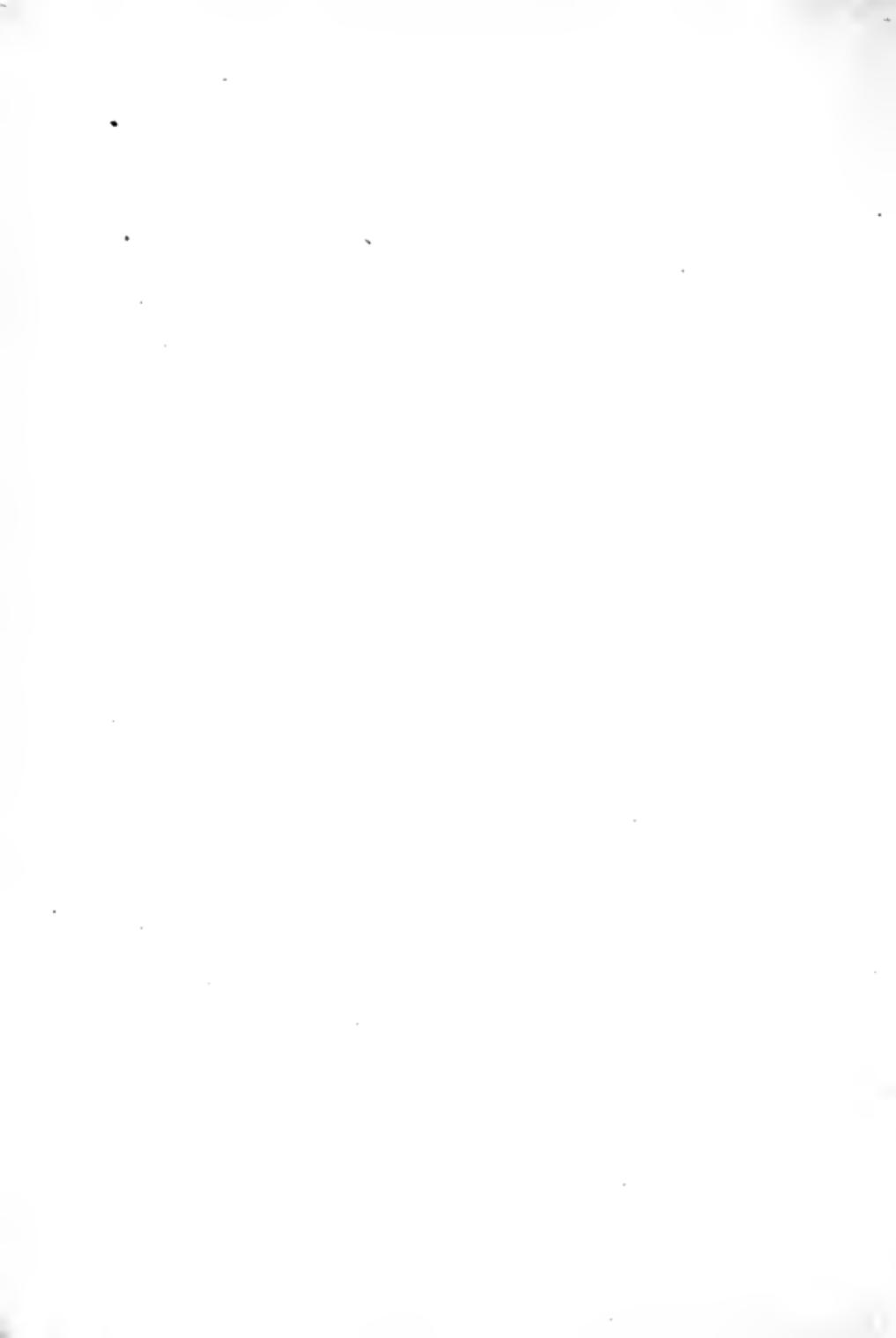
"THE PARLOR CAR" "THE SLEEPING CAR"
AND

"THE ALBANY DEPOT"

THE AUTHOR OF

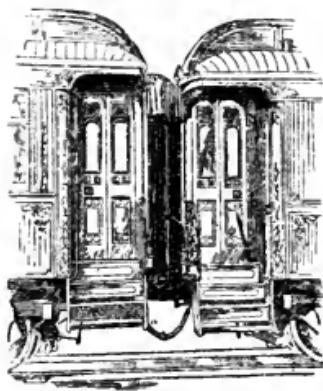
"IN THE VESTIBULE LIMITED"

INSCRIBES IT



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IN THE
SLEEPING-CAR FROM BOSTON



I

IN THE SLEEPING-CAR FROM BOSTON

THE New York and Chicago Limited train, composed wholly of vestibule "sleepers" (with a subsidiary baggage-car and a comfortable dining-car), leaves the Grand Central station in New York every morning at ten minutes before ten o'clock; and about three hours later it arrives at Albany, where there is adjoined to it another sleeper (of the same vestibule fashioning), which has left Boston at seven o'clock that morning. Then the train which has come up the valley of the Hudson, lengthened by the added car which has come across the valley of the Connecticut, starts out of the Albany station at a quarter past one o'clock on its journey up the valley of the Mohawk,

and thence along the shore of Lake Erie, and across the prairies of Michigan to Chicago.

One afternoon in the last week of September, when this train drew out of the Albany station in the teeth of a driving rain—the tail end of the equinoctial storm—there sat in the car which had come from Boston a young man of perhaps twenty-eight or thirty, solidly built, with a firm mouth, and with a pair of resolute gray eyes which contrasted with his thick brown hair. He occupied the forward section on the western side of the sleeper, and a heavy leather valise lay on the seat before him, with the October number of the *Arctic Monthly* tucked beneath one of its straps. A New York morning paper was held tightly in the young man's grasp. But he was not reading it, although he had his glasses on. He was staring out of the window at his left, though the pane was so bespattered with rain-drops that it was scarcely possible to see even the telegraph poles by the

side of the track. He had chanced to notice the date—September 27th—and then he had suddenly remembered that this had been his wedding day. September 27th was the day she had set for them to be married; not only had the engagement been announced, and many of the wedding presents received, but even the cards had been ordered. Yet here he was going West, alone, almost at the very hour when he had hoped to stand with her at the altar before which they were to be made man and wife. And it was all because of a foolish quarrel about nothing, in which both of them had been wrong, no doubt, and for which both of them were paying the penalty. He loved her as much as ever, and he cursed the miserable pride which had prevented his going to her once again to find out whether she did not love him still despite their disagreement and their silly parting.

Her figure rose before him again as he continued to gaze out of the car window—indeed it was rarely that she was not

before his vision—and he saw once more the flash of her black eyes, and he caught the glint of the sunlight on the coils of her black hair, and he noted again the trembling of the sensitive little mouth as she told him that they had made a mistake, and that it was well they had found it out before it was too late, and that they had best part forever. And as the rain beat hard upon the window through which the young man looked as through a glass darkly, seeing nothing, he wondered why he had taken his dismissal calmly. He marvelled now that he had accepted her unjust accusations, and that he had not defended himself more energetically. He recalled his emotions at the moment of the parting ; he felt again the hot wave of indignation that she should think so meanly of him as to believe him capable of the fault with which he was charged. He knew now by the chill at his heart that his pride had been misplaced. He knew now that it had been his duty to clear himself in her

eyes then and at once. He knew now that he had not acted for the best. And it was too late, for the day had come which had been set for the wedding; and here he was going West alone, and he did not know even where she might be—except that he and she were parted.

After five years' hard work in the West, Hallett Larcom had earned a vacation, and he had come East early in July for the first time since he had been graduated from the Harvard Law School. He had gone to spend a few days with a classmate at Narragansett Pier, and there he met Anita Vernon, and there he had staid until he had made her promise to marry him. She was an orphan; a sister of the classmate at whose house they had met. She lived in New York with an old-maid aunt, Miss Mary Van Dyne, and she was spending the summer at the Pier with her brother, Rudolph Vernon. After the lovers' quarrel that night she had left Narragansett by the earliest train the next morning, sending back,

without a word, the engagement ring he had given her but a few days before. On receipt of this, Hallett Larcom had been seized with a desire to rush off to New York after her, and to insist on explaining all, and to force her to love him again as he loved her still. But his pride was strong, and he knew that he had been unjustly accused, and he did nothing. He lingered at the Pier for a week or more in hope of hearing from her; then he had gone back to Boston to his relatives there, forbidding them to ask questions, and indignantly denying that Anita Vernon was in any way to blame for breaking off the match. At last, cutting his vacation short, he had started back to Denver, in the hope that hard work might bring surcease of sorrow. Until his eyes had fallen on the date of the newspaper, he had not known that he was taking a journey on the very day she had set for the wedding.

So intent was he in following the train of bitter thoughts and of delightful mem-



THE LOVERS' QUARREL



ories which the discovery had started that he had not noticed the movements of the other passengers in the car.

As soon as the Boston sleeper had been joined at Albany to the train from New York, the two ladies who occupied the section immediately behind him had left their seats, and gone forward into the dining-car for luncheon. Hallett Larcom had barely remarked them as they passed, and he was too absorbed by his own thoughts to pay any attention to them when they returned.

One of them was an alert old lady of nearly seventy, brisk and cheerful, with ample gray hair and the most wonderful bright blue eyes. The other lady was younger, scant sixty perhaps, yet of a much more sedate appearance, as though conscious of her duty as the chaperon of her more frivolous companion. She called the pleasant old lady with the curls and the smile "Miss Marlenspuyk," and the pleasant old lady called her "Mrs. Hitchcock."

As the two ladies resumed their seats behind Hallett Larcom, they continued their conversation.

"I met her last year in Washington," said Miss Marlenspuyk, "and we were having a delicious chat, when some man broke in and carried her off. That's the trouble with Washington—it's so hard to have your talk out; it's the city of magnificent distances and interrupted conversations. Now in Philadelphia nobody ever interrupts anybody. That's why I like to go there; they let me have my say out. You see, my mother was a Philadelphian, so they tolerate me. You know in Philadelphia they hold that the Tree of Life is a family tree, and they think that Columbus discovered America just to get acquainted with the Biddles."

Mrs. Hitchcock laughed lightly, but with dignity. "What a remarkable woman you are!" she returned; "and so restless, too. You are going now from Boston to Chicago, and last winter you divided yourself between New York and

Philadelphia and Washington. I don't believe you will be satisfied in heaven; you will find it too monotonous."

"Oh, I shall make out, I'm sure," responded the old maid, cheerily. "I have read that 'in my Father's house there are many mansions,' and I expect I shall go visiting around."

This time Mrs. Hitchcock's little laugh indicated that she was slightly shocked. All she said was, "Oh, Miss Marlen-spuyk!"

"You mustn't mind what I say," the old lady went on. "I must talk. I'm a conversational Gatling-gun—at least, that's what Rudolph Vernon called me last year. You know Rudolph Vernon, don't you, Mrs. Hitchcock—the brother of Anita?"

By chance these proper names fell into Hallett Larcom's ear, and roused him from his reverie. He had no desire to overhear his neighbors' conversation, but the sound of her name was an irresistible temptation.

"I've met him," Mrs. Hitchcock replied.

"Anita spent part of the summer at his place at Narragansett Pier," Miss Marlenspuyk continued. "It was there that she met the man she was going to marry; but I'm afraid he didn't know enough to appreciate her, as the engagement seems to have been broken off suddenly. She's a good girl, and she'll make a good wife some of these days; and when I heard that she was going to marry this Larcom from out West, somehow I had hopes that she had found a real man, and not one of the little whipper-snappers we see every summer at the watering-places nowadays—mere broilers, I call them."

The conversation was getting personal; still the man in the section in front of the speaker could not help but hear.

"We must take men as we find them," said Mrs. Hitchcock, philosophically. She wore black, merely edged with crape,

and there was the faintest outline of a widow's cap inside her bonnet.

"I wonder how it is I never found a man who would take me?" returned Miss Marlenespuyk, with a smile and a shake of her silver-gray curls.

"So do I, indeed, my dear," Mrs. Hitchcock responded. "I have often said I don't see how it was you never married."

"'Nobody axed me, sir,' she said," the old maid returned, laughing heartily; "and I'm not like a government contract, I can't advertise myself under the head of 'Proposals Invited.'"

"Do you mean to say, really, that no man ever proposed to you?" inquired Mrs. Hitchcock, with feminine interest.

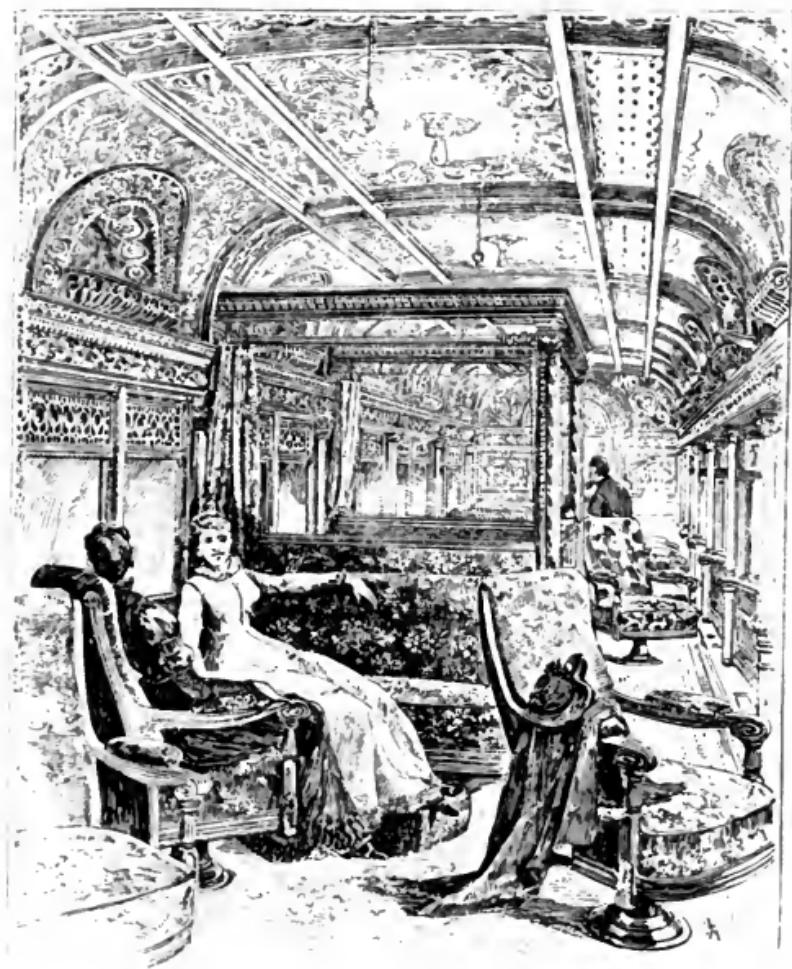
"Not one," answered Miss Marlenespuyk. "I thought one was going to speak once, but he didn't. He was a lieutenant in my father's regiment, and he danced with me three times running at a West Point ball, just before he joined his company and went to the Mexican war. He was killed at Chapultepec, and

I lost my last chance. I believe girls nowadays think nothing of refusing half a score of good offers before they pick the right one. I've a great mind to go forward into the dining-car again, and ask Annie Vernon how many times she has had to 'decline with thanks,' as the editors say."

Hallett Larcom started. It needed all his self-control to prevent his turning around and breaking into the conversation of the two ladies behind him. If he understood what the old lady had just said, then the woman he loved was in the very same train with him. And if she were? His heart gave a bound as he realized that fortune might still favor him with another chance.

A sudden gust of wind again flecked the car window with little drops of rain; and then the train passed on out of the storm, and there was even a hint of sunshine at the edge of the clouds on the hill-tops across the river.

"Miss Vernon is a pretty girl, as you



IN THE SLEEPING-CAR FROM BOSTON



say," Mrs. Hitchcock returned, "and that gray suit is becoming to her. No doubt she has had her share of attention."

Larcom listened with an intentness of which he felt ashamed. His ears had not deceived him, then ; there was a Miss Vernon in the dining-car. The old lady had called her Annie, and this was the name by which Rudolph Vernon's sister had been christened. "Anita" was little more than a nickname given to her by a schoolmate, because of the black eyes and brown skin, which seemed to insist on a Spanish name. Yet "Vernon" was not very uncommon, and it might well be that there were other Annie Vernons in the world besides the one he was longing for.

"And she deserved it all, no doubt," Miss Marlenspuyk responded. "She's a bright little body. Nothing is more saddening than foolish gayety, I find, and so many girls nowadays are giddy and giggling. But Annie Vernon is wholesome. Yet I don't believe even she can

thaw out the old couple she is travelling with."

"Who are they?" asked Mrs. Hitchcock. "They seem very plain people; not used to society, I thought."

"His name's Carkendal," Miss Marlenspuyk answered. "He's from Rhinebeck, or Peekskill, or somewhere up there, I believe, and he's the new Second Vice-President of the Methuselah Life-insurance Company. That's the company of which Annie Vernon's father was President until he died three years ago, you know."

"I remember now," said Mrs. Hitchcock.

"Mr. Carkendal is taking his wife with him on his annual tour to inspect all the agencies of the Methuselah company in the West," Miss Marlenspuyk continued. "And I suppose Annie Vernon is going out to Denver with them."

This last sentence Hallett Larcom did not catch, for as soon as he heard that the Annie Vernon on that train was the

daughter of the late President of the Methuselah Life-insurance Company, he knew that the woman he loved was near him. He sprang to his feet, and left the sleeper.

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Hitchcock. "That young man jumped up so suddenly it quite startled me."

"I wonder what it was we said that scared him," Miss Marlenspuyk responded. "Unless I'm very much mistaken, he has been taking in our conversation intently for the last five minutes."

"'Listeners never hear any good of themselves,'" quoted Mrs. Hitchcock.

"And rarely of other people, either," added Miss Marlenspuyk.



IN THE
DINING-CAR FROM NEW YORK



II

IN THE DINING-CAR FROM NEW YORK

HALLETT LARCOM was resolved to see Anita Vernon again, and at once. Putting his pride in his pocket, he intended to make an urgent appeal for her forgiveness. He did not know how she would receive him, but he was determined to insist on an interview, brief though it might be, and inconveniently public as it must be in a crowded railroad car. He knew that Mrs. Carkendal, who was Anita's aunt, did not like him, and had always been opposed to his marriage with her niece, and he decided that it would be wiser to keep her in ignorance of his presence, if this were possible.

The Boston sleeper had been attached to the end of the train, and when Lar-

com passed across the vestibuled platform, he found that he had to traverse three long New York and Chicago sleepers before he came to the dining-car. Even when he reached this he had to go down a narrow passage by the side of the kitchen and the pantry before he came to the broad central space where the tables were set.

He was all aglow for a sight of her face again, and with the ardent desire for a reconciliation. He had glanced right and left as he went through the train, fearing that she might have finished her luncheon and returned to her place. But when he came to the dining compartment, there she was before him.

He dropped into the nearest vacant chair without taking his eyes from her. She was seated on the other side of the car, three tables away from him. Her place faced his, and in front of her sat Mr. and Mrs. Carkendal, whose forbidding backs were turned towards the door through which Larcom had entered.

At first she did not see him. She was looking out of the window, still dotted with little drops of rain. As he gazed, he thought he discovered a weary droop of the eyelids, and he was sure that she was paler and thinner than when they had parted a few weeks before at Narragansett Pier. He saw that she had suffered from the separation, and he longed to take her in his arms again to comfort her.

The new Second Vice-President of the Methuselah Life-insurance Company was concluding an elaborate luncheon, in which pleasant task his wife had been aiding and abetting him; but the little food on her niece's plate was scarcely touched. Larcom saw Mrs. Carkendal speak to Anita, evidently urging her to eat, but the girl shook her head languidly, still staring out of the rain-besprinkled window.

Larcom could not take his eyes from her face even when the waiter came and stood by the side of his table. At last

the lover became aware of the attendant's presence, and waved him away impatiently.

"I don't want anything," he cried. Then, suddenly recalling his situation, and finding himself seated at a table in a dining-car, he said, hastily, "Oh, well, you may bring me what you like."

"Soup?" asked the man, a little surprised.

"Yes, soup," he answered; "that will do."

A moment after the waiter had gone back to the pantry to give the order, Anita Vernon moved uneasily, as though uncomfortable under Larcom's direct stare. As she turned her head from the window, he was gazing at her imploringly, with the adoration of love in his eyes. Their glances met, and for a second they looked each other full in the face.

She flushed instantly, and then she dropped her glance, and the color fled from her cheeks. His heart beat quickly, but he continued to watch her with

the same silent submission in his eyes. She broke off a bit of the roll beside her plate, and crumbled it nervously in her fingers. The blood slowly came back to her face, and then deserted it again. She reached out for the glass of water before her, and took two or three little sips. As she set down the glass, she raised her eyes again, and again they met his; and this time she could not but see his appealing expression, pathetic in its self-surrender. In that second glance, brief as it was, she recognized that he had suffered also. There was a line in his forehead she had never seen before; he seemed worn and heart-sore. She was sorry for him.

In the golden days of their summer courting at Narragansett Pier, when they were often in the midst of a crowd of merry young people on the beach, at the Casino, on the "Rocks," off yachting, or away on some excursion, he had devised a little signal whereby he could communicate his desire to have speech with her

alone, if only for a minute or two. If she noticed that he had taken off his eye-glasses temporarily and hung them on the upper button of his coat, she understood that he wanted a word in her private ear ; and if then she raised her hand to adjust a chance hair-pin, this told him that she had seen his signal.

Now when they sat apart in the dining-car after the long weeks of disheartening separation, he removed his glasses, and by an almost automatic movement he hung them on the accustomed button of his coat. Apparently she was not looking in his direction, but she was somehow conscious of this signal. Again the color flushed her cheeks, and fled at once, leaving them paler than before, and then a hesitating hand stole up to thrust back a straggling wisp of hair. All at once hope returned to the man who was following her every motion with wistful glance, and now he made sure that she was willing that he should speak to her.

The waiter brought Larcom the soup,

and was sent away impatiently. Soon it was apparent to the young lover that Mr. and Mrs. Carkendal had finished their repast. The waiter withdrew from their table with obvious dissatisfaction, bearing in his hand the exact money needed to liquidate their bill. Seemingly the new Second Vice-President of the Methuselah Life-insurance Company asked Anita Vernon if she were ready to return to their own car. She nodded, and rose to her feet ; and then once more, and for the fourth time, her cheeks flamed up and whitened again.

As it happened, the dining-car had been slowly emptying itself, and a scant half-dozen passengers remained in it when Mr. and Mrs. Carkendal left their table and turned to go out. Oddly enough, the hat which Hallett Larcom had been holding on his lap for a few seconds fell to the floor, and he had to bend down to pick it up. So far did he stoop that Mrs. Carkendal followed her husband down the aisle to the door of

the dining-car without catching sight of the man to whom her niece had been engaged. Miss Vernon came after her aunt. Her hand hung by her side, and as she passed, it was seized by the young fellow who had gone down on his knees but a moment earlier. She withdrew it gently, but not before he had managed to imprint a kiss on it, and not before he had felt a faint answering pressure of her tapering fingers.

"I must speak to you," he whispered, as she went on, "and now!"

She made no response, walking firmly, as though she had not heard.

"Aunty," she cried, suddenly, pausing just as Mr. and Mrs. Carkendal reached the door, "I think I'll change my mind, and have a cup of coffee, after all."

Mrs. Carkendal turned back. "Very well, my child," she said. "Shall I wait here with you?"

"Oh no," responded the girl. "You go on with Uncle Carkendal. I shall be back in a few minutes."

"Don't be long," said aunty, as she turned again to follow the new Second Vice-President of the Methuselah Life-insurance Company through the vestibuled passage to the adjoining sleeper, where their sections were.

Then Miss Vernon walked quietly back to the seat she had just vacated, and ordered a cup of coffee.

At last, looking up, as though by chance, she saw her lover's eager eyes still fixed upon her.

"Why, Mr. Larcom!" she cried. "Is that really you? Who would ever have thought of seeing you here?"

The few other passengers in the dining car saw nothing to call for remark in this chance meeting of a young man and a young woman. The portly clergyman who was then paying his bill thought that the young fellow was very lucky to know such a pretty girl.

"They are a good-looking couple," he said to himself as he passed them on his way forward to the smoking-car. "Why

isn't he enterprising enough to make her marry him?"

Larcom was by her side almost as soon as she had spoken his name. "Yes, it is I," he answered; "and I am happy to be here since I see you again. Oh, Nita, Nita, I have longed for you all these weeks! And now I have found you again, I shall make you listen to me."

Just then the waiter brought the cup of coffee she had ordered. When at length he departed, overpaid and smiling she looked at her lover and spoke rapidly:

"You need not make me listen to you at all. Indeed you needn't say a word; I know what you want to tell me. I've known for weeks now that the miserable story isn't true that I was foolish enough to believe. It is I who want you to listen to me till you promise to forgive me for having been so mean as to think that you could ever be so base as I thought you were. Oh, I don't know how I ever did it, and I don't see why you didn't insist on explaining everything."

"I know," he answered, penitently—"I know, Anita; it's all my fault. I was proud, and I've been ashamed of it ever since. But now I have you again, I—"

"But you haven't me now," she broke in. "I'm going out West. I'm travelling with my aunt, you know. I can't stay here gossiping with you. They will be wondering where I am."

"I must talk to you," he returned, forcibly. "And you must listen to me."

"Oh, if I *must*," she answered, "I suppose I must. But you needn't be so violent about it."

"Nita, if you only knew—" he began.

"Where is your seat?" she interrupted.

"In the rear car," he replied.

"The Boston car?" she continued.

"Yes," he answered.

"That's the one Miss Marlenspuyk is in," she returned. "She's a great friend of mine, and perhaps—mind, I say only perhaps—I may go back there by-and-by, just to have a little chat with her."

"Nita, you are an angel," he answered, trying to take her hand again.

She foiled this attempt with quiet dignity. "I think it will be best if Uncle Carkendal and aunty don't know that you are on the train," she said. "So you had better stay here till we get to Utica, which will be in a few minutes now. Then you can step out there, and slip back to your seat through the crowd in the station, so they won't see you. I sha'n't pay my visit to Miss Marlenspuyk until after we leave Utica."

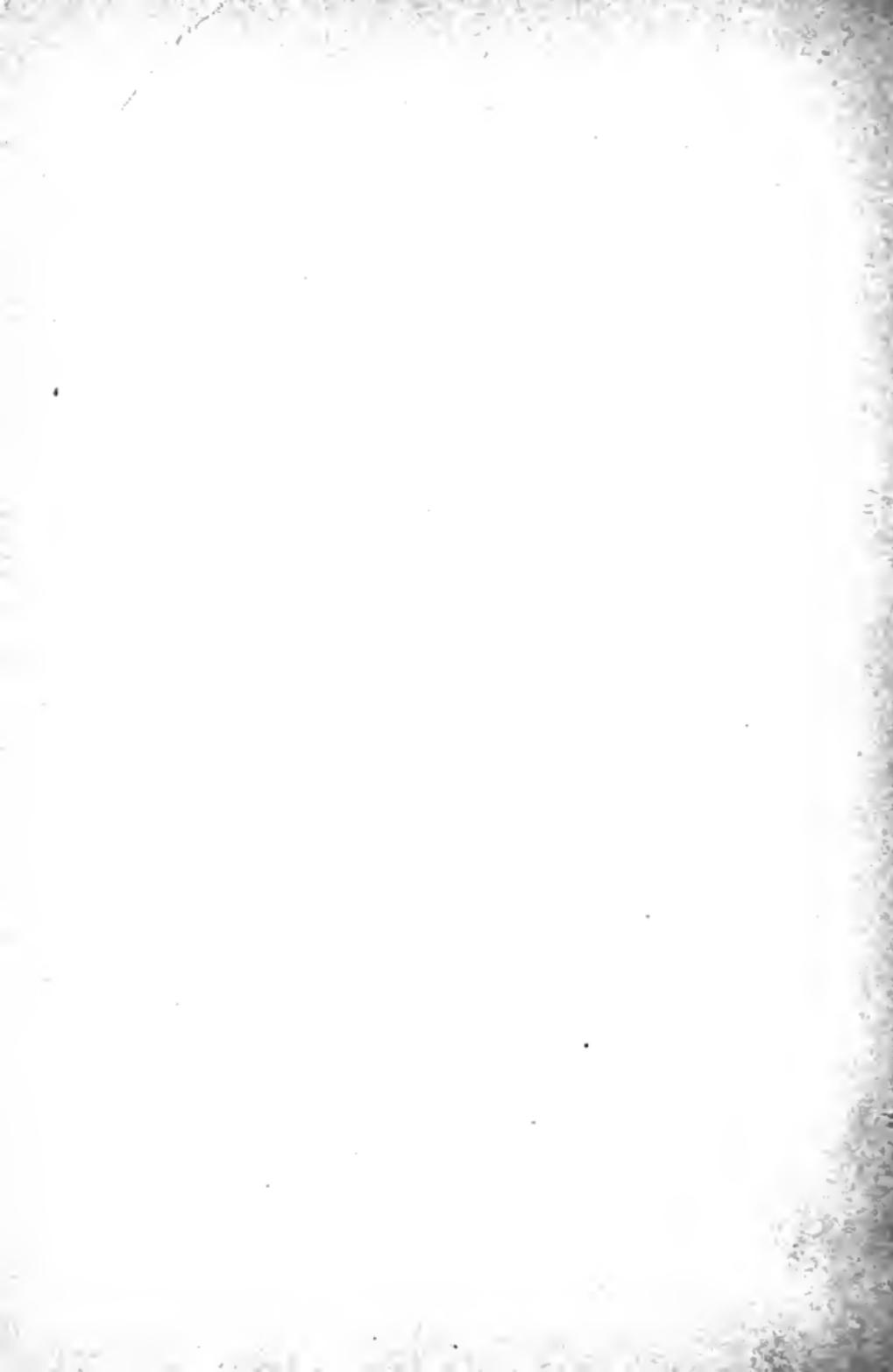
She touched her lips to the coffee, and then rose to go.

"Don't leave me yet," he cried.

"I must," she answered. "But if you are a good boy, I'll introduce you to Miss Marlenspuyk after we get to Utica. She's the most delightful old maid I know."

And with that she was gone, leaving him quite alone in the dining-car.

IN THE
SLEEPING-CAR FROM BOSTON



III

IN THE SLEEPING-CAR FROM BOSTON

WHEN the train drew into the dark station at Utica about half-past three, Hallett Larcom stepped down from the platform of the dining-car, and threaded his way through the crowd about the tracks, and thus regained the Boston sleeper at the far end of the train. He dropped into his seat just in time to hear Miss Marlenspuyk remark :

“ My father used to say that no woman had a right to dress so as to attract attention, unless she was beautiful enough to reward it.”

“ That is a hard saying,” Mrs. Hitchcock responded.

“ I took it to heart in the days of my youth, when I was homely,” Miss Mar-

lenspuyk returned, "and I've on it acted ever since."

"I won't believe that you were ever a homely girl," asserted Mrs. Hitchcock.

"You may believe it, for I was plain enough, goodness knows! My brother told me once he never could keep the clock wound up when I was at home."

"Indeed?" Mrs. Hitchcock returned, doubtfully. "How curious!"

"It wasn't until I was nearly three-score and ten that I had any looks at all," Miss Marlenspuyk continued. "Of course, now I know that I am a very presentable old tabby."

Mrs. Hitchcock's reply was lost in the sudden starting of the train, and indeed Hallett Larcom hardly heard the conversation of the two ladies who were talking barely a yard behind his ears. He was conscious of nothing but his own exceeding joyfulness. He had seen Nita again, and they had made up, and they would never quarrel more. His heart swelled with abundant happiness, and he

was oblivious of all things else. He failed to remark that the clouds were now clearing away, and that the wester-ing sun shone out for the first time that day. He did not see the lovely views which passed before his staring eyes, and he was careless that the trees showed the first faint flush of the fall, and that the yellowing leaves were whirled along in the wake of the train.

He did not even hear Mrs. Hitchcock's declaration that her head ached, and that she would therefore go back to her own private compartment at the rear of the car. He did not see this declaration carried into effect, and he did not note the stoppage of the stream of talk behind him. He was thinking of Nita, and only of her. He was wondering how soon he could see her again—how soon she would come to the car where he was awaiting her. He kept watch of the door, and was disappointed as it opened only to admit the conductor, or a passenger returning from the smoking car, or the train boy,

who proffered for sale a tall armful of novels, which were distributed about for examination that a casual purchaser might be tempted. As it chanced, the volume which was laid on the lap of Hallett Larcom was *Their Wedding Journey*. As he glanced down involuntarily and caught the title of the book, he thought bitterly of the irony of fate. If it had not been for the foolish quarrel, now all explained away, he would then be going on his bridal tour. Oddly enough, the trip would have been along the same road, for Nita and he had determined to go to Niagara on their way to his home in Denver.

It must have been near four o'clock when the vestibule door at the head of the car was pushed open, and Anita Vernon stood for a moment in the doorway.

Hallet Larcom sprang forward, but before he could reach her she had already recognized Miss Marlenspuyk in the section behind him.

"Why, Mr. Larcom!" she cried, as though surprised to see him. "Who would ever have thought of seeing you here?"

She shook hands with him speechless, and brushed past to Miss Marlenspuyk, conscious that her cheeks were not burning, although nearly every eye in the car was raised at her entrance.

"Annie Vernon," said Miss Marlenspuyk, "it's very good of you to come back here to see an old woman."

"But you are the dearest old woman in the world," returned Anita Vernon, dropping into the place Mrs. Hitchcock had recently vacated.

Not knowing exactly what to make of this, her lover stood helpless in the aisle. She looked up, and saw his masculine predicament.

"Miss Marlenspuyk," she said, "may I present Mr. Larcom to you?"

He bowed, and shook the hand the old lady held out to him, and sank into the seat before them.

"Mr. Hallett Larcom?" inquired Miss Marlenspuyk, with intention.

"Yes," answered the young lady, and her dark eyes met Miss Marlenspuyk's gaze without flinching.

"But I thought—" began the elderly woman. "However, it's none of my business."

"You are an old friend and a good friend too," asserted Anita, sinking her voice, "and I can tell you everything."

"That would take a long while," returned Miss Marlenspuyk; "but I confess I am a little curious to know how it is that you and Mr. Larcom here happen to be on the same train."

"It's all an accident, I assure you, Miss Marlenspuyk," he broke in. "I had no idea Nita was on board until I heard you mention her name. And then I just had to go and look her up."

"You know we were engaged," said Anita, shyly, "and I was foolish enough to believe some silly stuff Uncle Carkendal had heard about Hallett, and—"

"Oh, it was he who told you, was it?" Hallett interrupted.

"I didn't mean to let you know that," she answered; "but he only reported what he had heard, and I was goose enough to think that there might be something in it, and Hallett--"

"And I was too proud to defend myself," he interrupted again. "And so it was broken off, and I haven't had a happy hour since."

"Neither have I," she responded. "But now we have explained everything, and I shall never be so silly again."

"I see," said Miss Marlenspuyk; "and it seems to me that it was a very lucky railroad accident for you both that you should both happen to be passengers on the same train."

"Nita," declared Hallett Larcom, leaning forward, "you haven't told me how it is that you are here."

"Haven't I?" she answered. "I'm here because I knew you were very proud, and I'd treated you so badly you'd never come

to me, and I knew I couldn't be happy without you one single day, so when Uncle Carkendal was going to start off on his rounds, I asked aunty to take me along, because, you see, I thought that perhaps while we were in Denver I might—”

“ You are going to Denver ?” he cried.
“ Nita, you are an angel !”

“ No, she isn't,” said Miss Marlenspuyk.
“ She's only a woman.”

“ Well, I'm satisfied with her just as she is,” he returned, emphatically.

“ And so the engagement is on again ?” was Miss Marlenspuyk's next inquiry.

“ Of course it is,” asserted the lover.

“ Is it ?” queried the young lady. “ I suppose it must be.”

“ Don't you want to marry me ?” he asked.

“ I don't want another engagement,” she responded, “ with congratulations, and presents, and fixing the day once more, and all that. I couldn't stand it again.”

“ You are the only wedding present I

want," he declared. "And as for fixing the day, I'll elope with you to-morrow, if you'll have me at such short notice."

"There is plenty of time to talk of that," she responded, rising. "I'll see you again before we arrive in Chicago to-morrow morning."

"But you are not going to leave us now?" he asked, piteously.

"I must," she answered, taking off her long musketeer gloves. "Uncle Carkendal will be wondering what has become of me."

"And sha'n't I see you again to-night?" he besought.

She let her gloves fall upon the seat from which she had just risen. "If I forget them here," she said, "I suppose I shall have to come back for them."

Miss Marlenspuyk smiled. "Your mother was a woman," was her comment.

"How soon will you come?" Larcom inquired, eagerly.

"Not till after dinner," she answered. "I'll come back just to say good-night

before we get to Buffalo. And now I must leave you, and I want you to be very nice to Miss Marlenspuyk, and very attentive, for she's a dear friend of mine, and she's just as good as she can be."

And with that she kissed the old lady, and shook hands with the wondering lover, and vanished through the vestibule door.

He stood looking after her for a moment in silence. Then he took the seat beside Miss Marlenspuyk.

"Don't you think you are a very lucky young man?" she asked.

"Don't I?" was his energetic answer.

"I'm very fond of nice girls, and I know lots of them, but I don't know one nicer than Annie Vernon. When are you two going to be married?"

The young man smiled bitterly. "We *were* going to be married to-day—I believe the cards were printed—but *now* I don't know when the wedding will be. Nita says she doesn't want another engagement and more cards; and she's

travelling with old Carkendal, and he disapproves of me, it seems; and I'm afraid he'll disapprove of me all the more when he gets out to Denver. But wait till I get her out there, and I'll make her marry me—off-hand—on the spot."

"An engagement is only a skirmish, you know," Miss Marlenspuyk said, "while matrimony is a pitched battle; and love, like war, has its food for powder. Do you think you are going to be happy?"

"I'm certain of it," he replied, forcibly.

"And she?" asked the old lady.

"I shall do my best to make her happy," he answered, with ardor; "and if love can give happiness, she is sure of it. Why do you doubt?"

"I don't know," she responded, with a note of sadness in her voice. "For the most part happiness is either a hope or a memory; it is rarely a present possession, even during the honey-moon; and you two have quarrelled once already."

"That was a stupid mistake," he declared; "it will never happen again."

"Perhaps not," the old lady assented, "and yet— Well, you seem to be a straightforward young fellow, decent and manly, and you certainly are very much in love. Why do you wait till you get to Denver? To-day was your appointed wedding-day—why not marry Annie to-day?"

"To-day?" he echoed, taken by surprise.

"Yes," she answered.

"On the cars?" he went on.

"Why not?" was her retort.

"But how?" he asked. "There isn't a clergyman on the train."

"Yes, there is. I saw him at lunch," she responded.

"And where could he marry us?" the young man inquired, having at last seized the fact that the old lady's suggestion was possible.

"My friend Mrs. Hitchcock has a private compartment in the rear of this car," said Miss Marlenspuyk. "I will borrow it from her if you will get the clergyman."

"And will Nita consent?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Ah," returned the old lady, "as to that I don't know. You will have to talk her over."

"And I'll do it, too," said Hallett Larcom, emphatically. "Miss Marlenspuyk, Nita was right to call you good. You are more than that; you've got lots of business sense."

Miss Marlenspuyk smiled. "I hope I am not so old," she said, "that I cannot understand young folks' ways."

"Who is this clergyman you saw?" he inquired. "Do you know him? Can't you give me a few pointers about him?"

"He is Dr. Pennington," she responded—"Dr. Rittenhouse Huger Pennington, of Philadelphia—and I know him pretty well. He is a portly man of about fifty, with grayish side whiskers. He was a lawyer before he entered the ministry. He is a clever man—perhaps a little too well aware of his cleverness."

"I see," Larcom assented. "Then I suppose I can flatter him up?"

"Flattery is a skeleton-key that opens the hearts of most men," the old maid answered. "If you insert it skilfully into Dr. Pennington, you can probably 'get anything out of him you want."

"I think I have him down fine," he said. "Philadelphian—used to be a lawyer—thinks a good deal of himself. Oh, I say, perhaps he won't think much of me. He doesn't know me from Adam—except by the costume."

"Are you a son of General Larcom?" she asked.

"How did you know?" he returned.
"Your mother was an Otis, wasn't she?"

He nodded.

Then she went on. "Well, let him know that, and he will be glad to see you: he's a Philadelphian. My mother was a Philadelphian, you see, and so I have a sort of doomsday-book memory."

"What is Dr. Pennington's church?" he inquired.

"He is the rector of St. Boniface's," she replied.

"Then I suppose he will have on a white choker and a regular clergyman's outfit?" he continued. "I guess I can recognize him." He took out his watch and looked at it. "It's ten minutes to five now. At four-fifty-five we are due in Syracuse, and then I'll slip through the crowd once more, and get into the smoker without letting Uncle Carkendal catch sight of me. If the dominie is there, I'll tackle him; I've got two hours to do it in, for we don't get to Rochester till six-fifty. If he has left the smoker, I'll pursue him to his lair, even if I have to face the Carkendals, male and female. Has the doctor any special hobby?"

"Let's see," the old lady replied. "He plays whist, and he is President of the Prison Reform League, and he is very Broad Church; but what he is most interested in is himself."

"A real philanthropist, I suppose," the young man commented; "he believes in

the greatest good of the greatest number, only in his eyes the greatest number is No. 1. It's lucky I've only two hours' with him ; he might be a terrible bore."

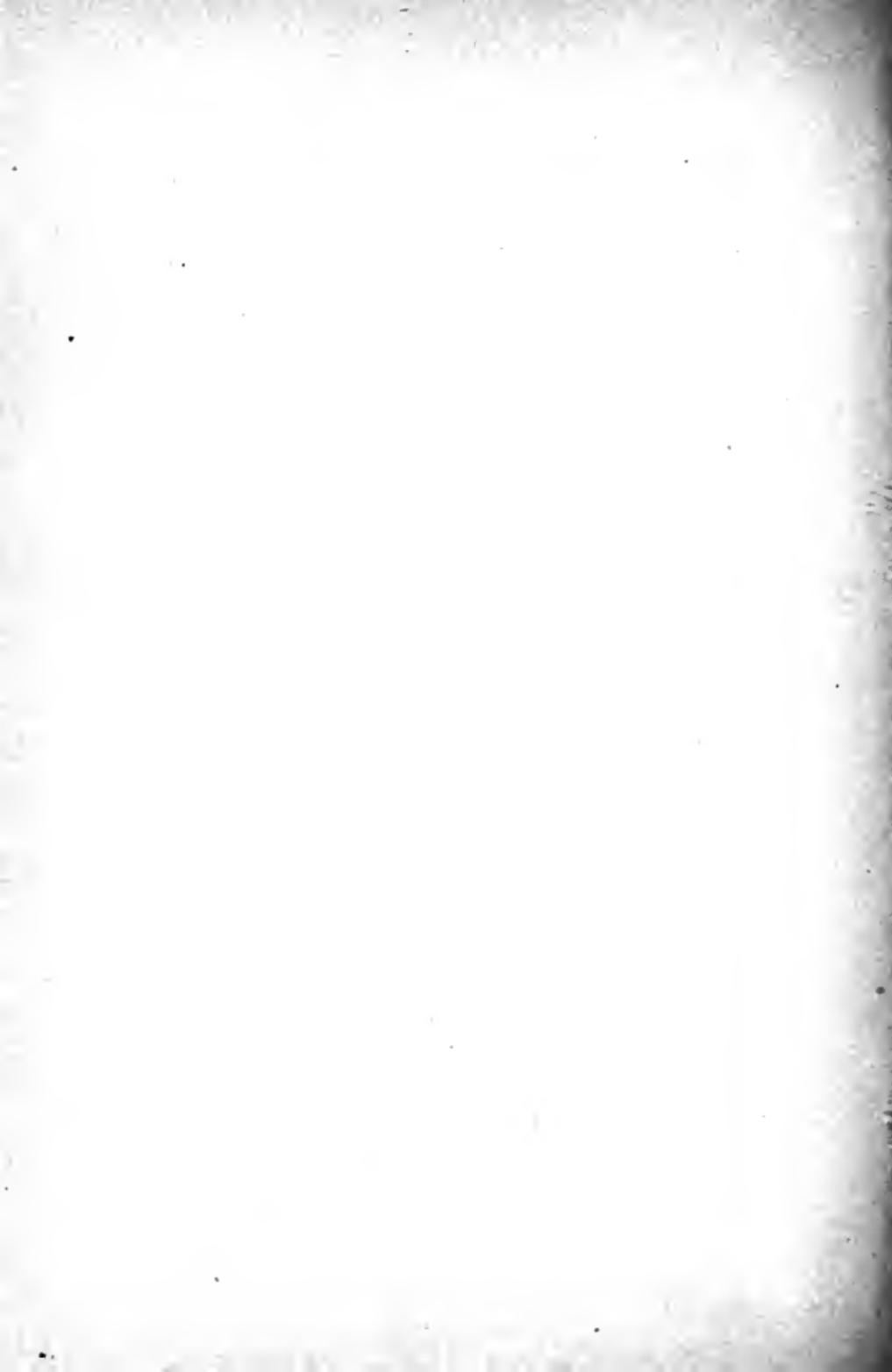
" You can always treat an egotist on the homœopathic plan," said Miss Marlenspuyk, as the train slackened its speed on entering Syracuse. " Talk to him about yourself, you know."

" I won't try the remedy till after I've got him to promise to marry us," Larcom returned ; " and I'll make him do that, if I have to use personal violence."

" And if that fails," the old lady suggested, " you can tell him that I am in this car, and that I would like to see him for a few minutes. Perhaps I may be able to persuade him."

Then the train stopped in the station at Syracuse. Hallett Larcom started for the door of the car. Miss Marlenspuyk reached down to her travelling bag and took out of it a simply bound copy of *Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie*.

IN THE
SMOKING-CAR FROM NEW YORK



IV

IN THE SMOKING-CAR FROM NEW YORK

THE car at the head of the New York and Chicago Limited was divided, and subserved several uses. The forward half of it contained the baggage; the two small compartments "amidships," so to speak, were arranged, one as a bath-room and the other as a barber-shop; and then came the more spacious saloon reserved for the smokers, and furnished with a *buffet*—or, in other words with a bar—behind which stood the sable attendant, who was ready to prepare a mixed drink for the traveller, or to provide him with any book that might be chosen from the little library of modern literature that filled two or three shelves. Here also were desks supplied with abundant writing materials.

When Hallett Larcom entered this smoking-car at Syracuse there were only six or seven men in it, lounging about in the comfortable wicker arm-chairs; and it was with pleasure that he discovered the Rev. Rittenhouse Huger Pennington among them. There was no difficulty whatever in recognizing him from Miss Marlenspuyk's description. He was obviously a clergyman, and as obviously a Philadelphian. He was portly and handsome, full-bodied and full-blooded, with an air of high breeding, and with the manner of one accustomed to deference. Larcom saw at once that Dr. Pennington was certainly Broad Church, that he probably played whist, and that he was a proper President of the Prison Reform League, at once dignified and energetic. The young Denver lawyer "took stock" of the Philadelphia clergyman—he "sized him up," to use his own idiom—and he decided that whatever the rector of St. Boniface might undertake to do would be thoroughly well done, and that

therefore the rector of St. Boniface would be an excellent person to perform the rite of marriage between Hallett Larcom and Anita Vernon. He concluded also, after as careful a study of Dr. Pennington's face as he dared attempt, that it would be no easy matter to persuade the clergyman to marry them, but that it might be done if one went to work about it in the right way.

When the train rolled out of the Syracuse station at five o'clock, Dr. Pennington had been engaged in conversation by a casual stranger, a little sandy man, who was smoking a rapid succession of cigarettes. To this person's loquacity Dr. Pennington, who was finishing a remarkably good cigar, listened with an air of amused superiority, of which the little man was wholly unconscious.

Hallett Larcom dropped into a seat opposite to them, and began his study of the clergyman so that he might devise a plan of attack.

The little sandy man had just laid

70 IN THE SMOKING-CAR FROM NEW YORK

down a newspaper. "There's England, now," he was saying, "she can't keep her hands off the rest of the world. She's always prying and meddling and grabbing something somewhere. There isn't anything too big for Great Britain to swallow, and there isn't anything too little, either. She just takes anything she can lay her hands on."

"Except a joke," remarked the Philadelphian, blandly.

"How?" asked the other.

"England is not quick at taking a jest," explained the clergyman. "The British are known to be often impervious to humor."

"Oh, I see," said the little man. "That's so, too. As my brother says—he is in the hardware business at Utica, and got almost the biggest store in the city, too—as my brother says, 'If you've got to explain a joke to an Englishman, you want to start in early in the morning and take your dinner pail along.'"

"Indeed," assented Dr. Pennington, courteously.

"And he's got a joke for 'em, too," the little man went on, "a real practical joke, if they'll only take it. His idea is to find an English syndicate to buy out all the retail hardware stores in the United States. He'll sell his, too—at a price. He ain't afraid of British gold, he ain't."

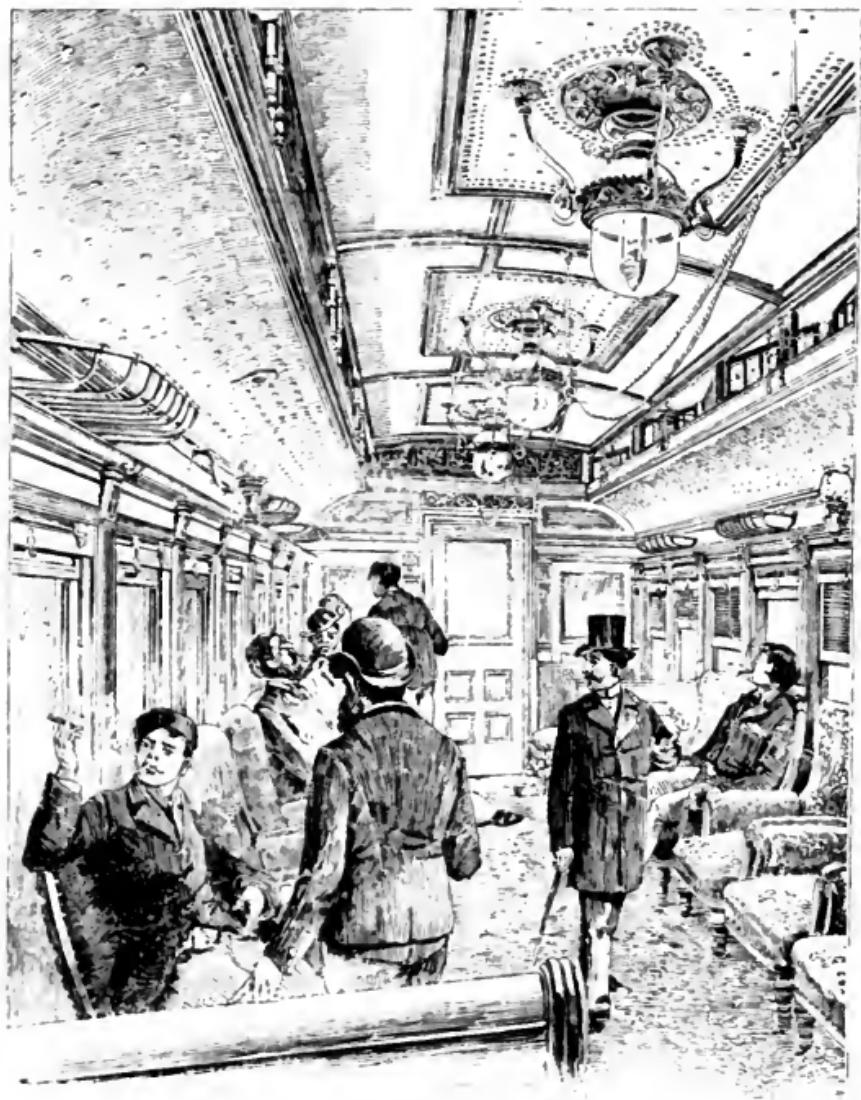
The Philadelphia clergyman continued to listen with amused tolerance, like an explorer on his first meeting with some strange new manner of man.

By this time Larcom had concluded his examination of Dr. Pennington, and he had made his deductions therefrom. He believed that he would be able to persuade the clergyman to perform the marriage. Believing this, he made ready for the event. Certain that the Philadelphian would not leave the smoking car until his cigar was finished, Larcom left his seat and went over to one of the little desks. Taking pen and paper, he thought for a moment, and then he wrote

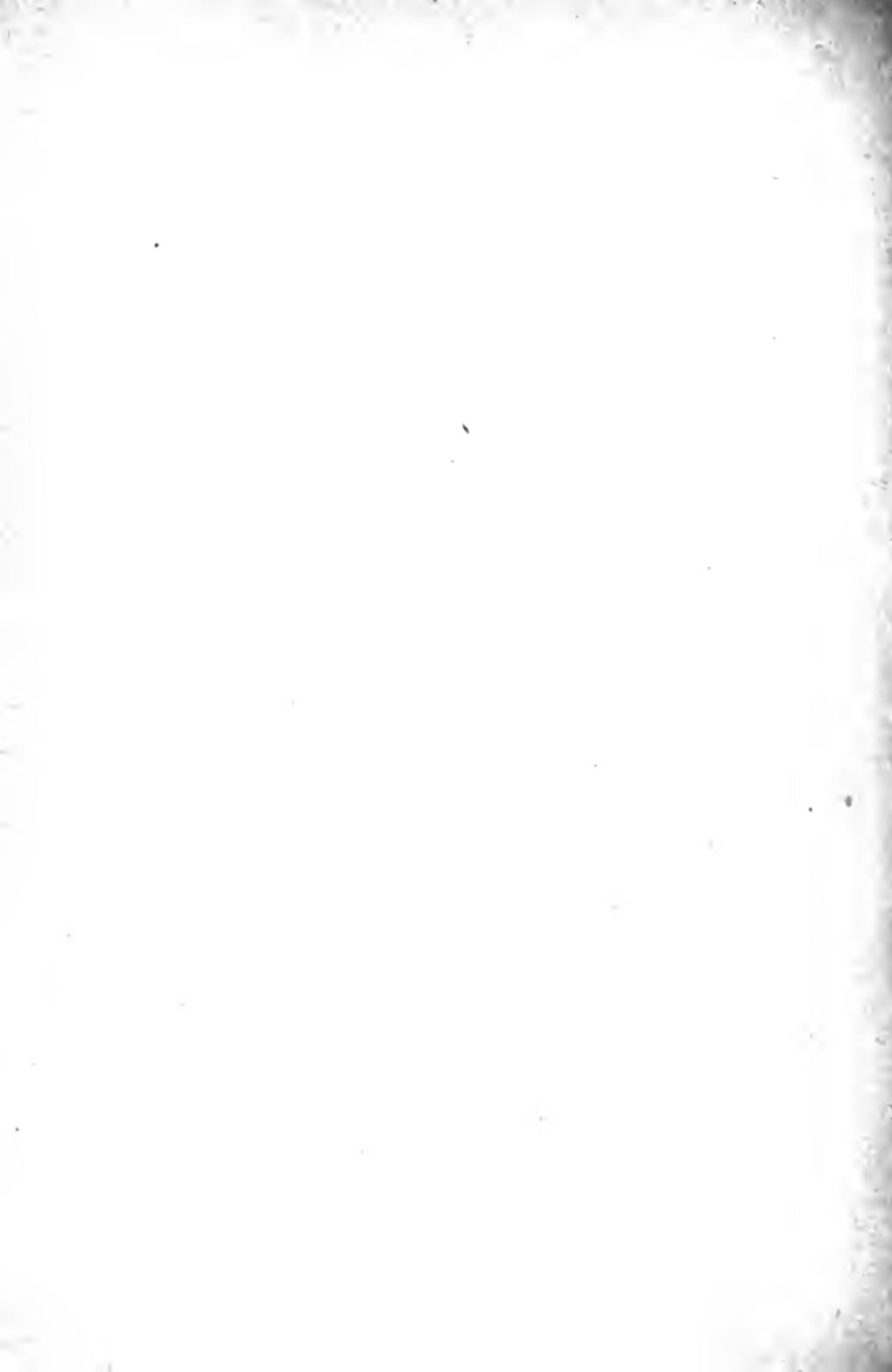
a letter, pausing now and again as though to pick a word, and smiling as if it were a joke which he enjoyed hugely. When the letter was written he read it over carefully, and enclosed it in an envelope, which he addressed to John Abram Carr-kendal, Esq. Then he placed it in his pocket.

Thinking that Dr. Pennington must now be nearing the end of his cigar, Larcom left the half-screened section in which the desks were made private, and returned to the main smoking saloon. He was just in time to see the sandy little man rise from his seat by the side of the clergyman, saying:

“I really must go now. I’ve got my wife back there in the sleeper, and she don’t like to be left more than two or three hours at a whack. You know what women are. But I’m mighty glad to have seen you, and if you ever get out to Sheboygan, you must come and see me. My name’s Cyrus C. Tuttle. I’ve got the biggest clothing emporium in all that



IN THE SMOKING-CAR FROM NEW YORK



section of Wisconsin, and I'll be glad to show you round."

When he had gone, Larcom took the seat just vacated. "Have I not the pleasure of speaking to Dr. Pennington?" he began.

"That is my name," said the Philadelphian, with a faint intonation of severity.

"I thought I could not be mistaken, although I have never had the pleasure of meeting you before," the young man continued.

Dr. Pennington's silence indicated cold but courteous expectation.

"My name is Hallett Larcom, and I think you used to know my father, General Larcom."

"Bless my soul!" said the clergyman, with sudden cordiality. "Are you a son of Eldridge Larcom? Yes, I see a likeness, now that I look for it. I went to Trinity College with your father, and we studied law together in Judge Hildreth's office at Hartford. I gave up the law for the Church, but your father had no sum-

mons to the pulpit, and he remained at the bar. He used to say that I preached and he practised. Ha ! ha !"

Hallett Larcom's laugh at his father's joke was commingled of filial piety and self-seeking tact.

"And your mother," Dr. Pennington continued, "she was a charming woman, Miss Otis, was she not? Ah! I thought my memory was not at fault. There were three sisters, all charming women. Ah, young man! it is for you to be proud that you come of so good a stock. There are forms of family pride that are foolish and offensive, no doubt; but a proper respect for one's ancestors, and for one's self as their descendant, is not misplaced. That it is which makes me so thoroughly out of patience with this Darwinian theory, which otherwise has much to recommend it. How can a man expect sympathy who insists on climbing up his own family tree merely to shake hands with the monkey grinning at the top?"

Thus Dr. Pennington dropped at once

into friendly talk with the son of his old friend, and thus the young man let him run on, acting the part of the good listener, and supplying the proper proportion of appreciative queries. Knowing that the man with a hobby is always anxious to lead a cavalry charge on it, Larcom slowly steered the conversation to the subject of prison reform, and finally captivated the President of the League by adducing certain heretical theories, and then allowing himself to be convinced of their falsity, and converted to the proper opinion.

Thus the time passed, and the train drew nigh to Rochester, and as yet Halllett Larcom had seen no chance of introducing the subject nearest his heart. Once or twice, when occasion served, the young man had not ventured to avail himself of it, in spite of himself awed not a little by the impressive manner of the clergyman. What he wanted Dr. Pennington to do was most unconventional, and Larcom really dreaded the

expression of condemnatory surprise with which the rector of St. Boniface's would surely greet his request. The afternoon waned, and there was a beautiful sunset, rosy with promise and gilt by hope; then the brief twilight descended, and veiled the fleeting landscape with its haze. Still the young lawyer from Denver had not yet mustered up courage to ask the clergyman from Philadelphia to perform the marriage ceremony.

At last Dr. Pennington looked at his watch. "Bless my soul!" he said. "It is nearly seven o'clock. I must go and see what they can give me for dinner. Really the table is not at all bad, when you consider the many difficulties under which the cooks must labor; and of course any one who is used to good living does not expect too much when he is travelling."

At ten minutes to seven the train was due in Rochester, and if Larcom did not capture his clergyman then, he had lost his last chance. He roused himself as

the engine slowed up on nearing the station.

"Doctor Pennington," he began, in desperation, "I have a very great favor to ask you."

"What is it?" the clergyman returned, with a stiffening of manner so slight that only a man made doubly observant by anxiety could detect it.

Yet, slight as it was, it sufficed to check Larcom again. Then he caught at a means of saving time, and of gaining a more favorable occasion for making the final request.

"You know Miss Marlenspuyk, of New York?" he said, hurriedly.

"A charming old lady, and she is on the train with us, I believe," the doctor replied.

"Yes," the young man went on; "it was she who told me you were on board, and she told me that she wanted to see you for a moment. There was something very particular she wished to ask you."

"Bless my soul!" declared Dr. Pennington. "Something very particular Miss Marlenspuyk wishes to ask me? I confess that I cannot conceive what it may be. However, I will go back and wait on her after dinner."

"Doctor," urged the young man, "I should take it as a great favor if you would go now. The train will stop in a minute, and we can get out and walk back to the Boston car, where Miss Marlenspuyk is."

The brakes grated beneath them at that moment, and the train came gently to a stand in the Rochester station.

"Well," Dr. Pennington yielded, "since you are so urgent, I will go with you. But I confess my curiosity to discover why Miss Marlenspuyk desires to see me thus particularly."

Elated at this temporary advantage, Hallett Larcom handed the clergyman his hat, and the two left the smoking-car, and walked through the station towards the end of the train.

IN THE
SLEEPING-CAR FROM BOSTON



v

IN THE SLEEPING-CAR FROM BOSTON

THE train was starting forward again just as Dr. Pennington and Hallett Larcom entered the rear car. Miss Marlenspuyk was waiting for them. She greeted the clergyman most cordially.

"Why, Dr. Pennington," she said, "I'm delighted to see you. It is really very kind of you to come. I don't know what these young people would have done if you had not been here to help them out of the difficulty."

"I confess that I can scarcely say I understand exactly what—" Dr. Pennington began.

"The fact is, Miss Marlenspuyk," interrupted Larcom, "I have not yet been able to explain to Dr. Pennington just

what it was we wanted him to do. I—I haven't had time. I told him only that you wished to see him."

"And so I do," she declared, promptly. "I've arranged everything with Mrs. Hitchcock; she will be delighted to let us have her state-room whenever we are ready for the wedding."

"For the wedding?" echoed the clergyman, in stiffening astonishment.

"Yes," Miss Marlenspuyk replied. "I will explain it all to you in a minute."

"I confess that I don't see—" he began again.

"But you shall see all in good time," the old maid assured him. "Now, Mr. Larcom, since you have left this for me to do, I leave Annie Vernon in your hands. She may be here any minute, and I rely on you to break it to her gently, and to persuade her."

"I'll do that," he declared. Adding in a whisper, "I can coax *her*, if you will only talk over the dominie."

"I understood from Mr. Larcom here,"

said Dr. Pennington, "that you desired to see me, Miss Marlenspuyk, and—"

"And you are a dear good man to come at once," the old maid broke in. "To-day is the day fixed for Mr. Larcom's wedding."

"Indeed?" exclaimed the clergyman, in surprise. "Is he then taking his bridal tour alone?"

"He and the young lady had a lovers' quarrel," explained Miss Marlenspuyk, speaking rapidly, "and broke off the engagement. But she is on this train to-day by accident, and they have made up, and we rely on you to marry them."

"On me?" he repeated, in astonishment.

"On you," she returned.

"But I never heard of such a thing in my life," he declared.

"Neither did I," she said; "but that's no reason. Here are two young people engaged to be married, and here is the appointed day, and you are the only clergyman available, so of course we count on you."

"But I can't marry a couple in another man's parish," he asserted. "It would be most unprofessional."

"Whose parish are you in now?" she asked.

"Really I have no idea," he answered.

"This train is going fully forty miles an hour," she declared; "probably you won't be able to finish marrying them all in one parish. Very likely we shall even be in another diocese before the ceremony is finished."

"But, my dear lady, I—" he began once more.

"Hush!" cried Miss Marlenspuyk. "Here is the bride."

Hallett Larcom sprang to the door as Anita Vernon passed in through the vestibule.

"I've run away only for a minute," she said; "just to get my gloves."

"Never mind your gloves now," her lover responded. "Nita, do you know what day this is?"

"It's the 27th of September, isn't it?" she answered.

"It's our wedding day," he said. "And as we are engaged again, just as if nothing had happened, we are going to be married right now."

"Now!" she repeated. "Don't be absurd."

"But you fixed the day yourself," he answered, unhesitatingly, and with far more courage and energy than he had shown in his dealing with Dr. Pennington.

"Oh, I can't," she declared, and he detected a hint of wavering in her tone.

"You must," he asserted, forcibly.

"Why not wait till we get to Denver, at least?" she urged.

"Because I don't want to take any chances," he responded, firmly. "And besides, when we get to Denver your uncle Carkendal will be down on me more than ever: I'm retained in three important cases against the Methuselah."

"But there isn't any clergyman," she said, beating about for objections.

"That's the Rev. Dr. Pennington," he answered, "talking to Miss Marlenspuyk in the section right behind us."

"And you haven't any ring," she said, "I can't be married without a ring."

For a second the lover was puzzled. Then he leaned forward, and unstrapped the leather valise on the seat before him, and unlocked it and took out a little box.

When she saw this, she said, "Oh!"

He opened the box and lifted out a diamond ring.

"Here's the engagement ring you sent back to me," he explained, placing it on her finger. "Now we are engaged again. And you may remember that it was a little too large, and so I got you a plain gold 'keeper' to hold it on safely. Here is that 'keeper,' and I propose to use it as wedding-ring."

"We can't be married out here, right in the middle of a parlor-car," she said, with obvious signs of yielding. "That would be horrid."

"Mrs. Hitchcock has the private com-

partment at the end of the car," he explained, with triumphant persistence, "and she has placed this at our disposal."

"Oh, you have an answer for everything," said the bride.

"I have an answer for the dominie when he asks me, by-and-by, if I'll take this woman for my wedded wife," he replied.

"But I can't get married without telling aunty, and then there's Uncle Carkendal," she objected,

"You are going to get married without telling aunty or Uncle Carkendal either," he declared, emphatically; "though you may go back to them after the ceremony for the few minutes before we get to Buffalo."

"But I'd never dare tell Uncle Carkendal," she said.

"You needn't tell him," he responded. "What's his seat, and what's the car?"

"The car is the 'Rip Van Winkle,'" she answered, "and his section is No. 10."

He took out of his pocket the letter he

had written at the desk in the smoking car, and beneath the name of John Abram Carkendal he wrote, "Section 10, sleeper 'Rip Van Winkle.'"

"Do you see that?" he asked, "That is a full explanation, and that will be handed to Uncle Carkendal by the porter of the car as the train pulls out of Buffalo without us."

"Without us?" she echoed,

"Don't you remember that we are going to Niagara for our wedding trip?" he explained. "You will step out of the 'Rip Van Winkle' at Buffalo at half-past eight, and I will be on the platform waiting for you, and in less than an hour we shall be at Niagara, ready for a walk to see the Falls by moonlight."

She looked at him with admiration. "You have a head for business," she declared. "You quite take my breath away."

Hallett Larcom had never doubted of his victory, but he was rejoiced when it was won. He rose to his feet, and lean-

ing over the back of the seat, he called to the clergyman, who was sitting there by the side of Miss Marlenspuyk, with whom he was still keeping up a most animated discussion.

"Dr. Pennington," said the young man, "I want to introduce you to Miss Nita Vernon, and we are ready to proceed with the ceremony whenever you are."

"Oh, Hallett!" cried Miss Vernon.

"Is not this the charming young lady I noticed this afternoon in the dining-car?" inquired Dr. Pennington, rising. "And, bless my soul! I remember now, it was you I saw talking to her."

"You cannot refuse to marry so good-looking a couple, can you, now?" urged Miss Marlenspuyk. "Besides, I shall not let you go until the ceremony is performed, and I warn you that we shall be in Buffalo in an hour now, and they take off the dining-car there."

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Pennington again, "I didn't know that. I thought it went all the way to Chicago. Well,

then, if you insist, I suppose I must marry these young people, though it is all very irregular, and I do hope that the papers will not get hold of it."

As he walked to the rear of the car with Miss Marlenspuyk, following the bride and groom, he said: "She is really a charming girl. I do not wonder that he does not desire the wedding day to be postponed. I shall certainly claim the old-fashioned privilege of saluting the bride."

When they reached Mrs. Hitchcock's compartment, barely large enough to hold them all, Miss Marlenspuyk had to present them to the occupant of the state-room.

"I have often heard my son Mather speak of you," said Mrs. Hitchcock to Anita.

"Oh, is little Mat Hitchcock your son?" asked Larcom, looking at Anita, who smiled gently, remembering that her lover had once been jealous of young Hitchcock's attentions to her early in

the summer at Narragansett Pier, when the bride and the groom were beginning to fall in love.

Then Miss Marlenspuyk produced a prayer-book, which she had taken from her bag, where it had lain ~~side~~ by side with *Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie*.

Dr. Pennington took the book, and began to read the marriage service with great dignity and impressiveness. Miss Marlenspuyk, smiling, though a tear lay close to her eyelid, acted as the only bridesmaid, and at her request Mrs. Hitchcock ventured to give away the bride. The groom was ready with the ring when it was needed.

And thus, on the appointed day, Hallett Larcom and Anita Vernon were made man and wife, while the New York and Chicago Limited was rushing onward through the gathering night at a speed of nearly fifty miles an hour.

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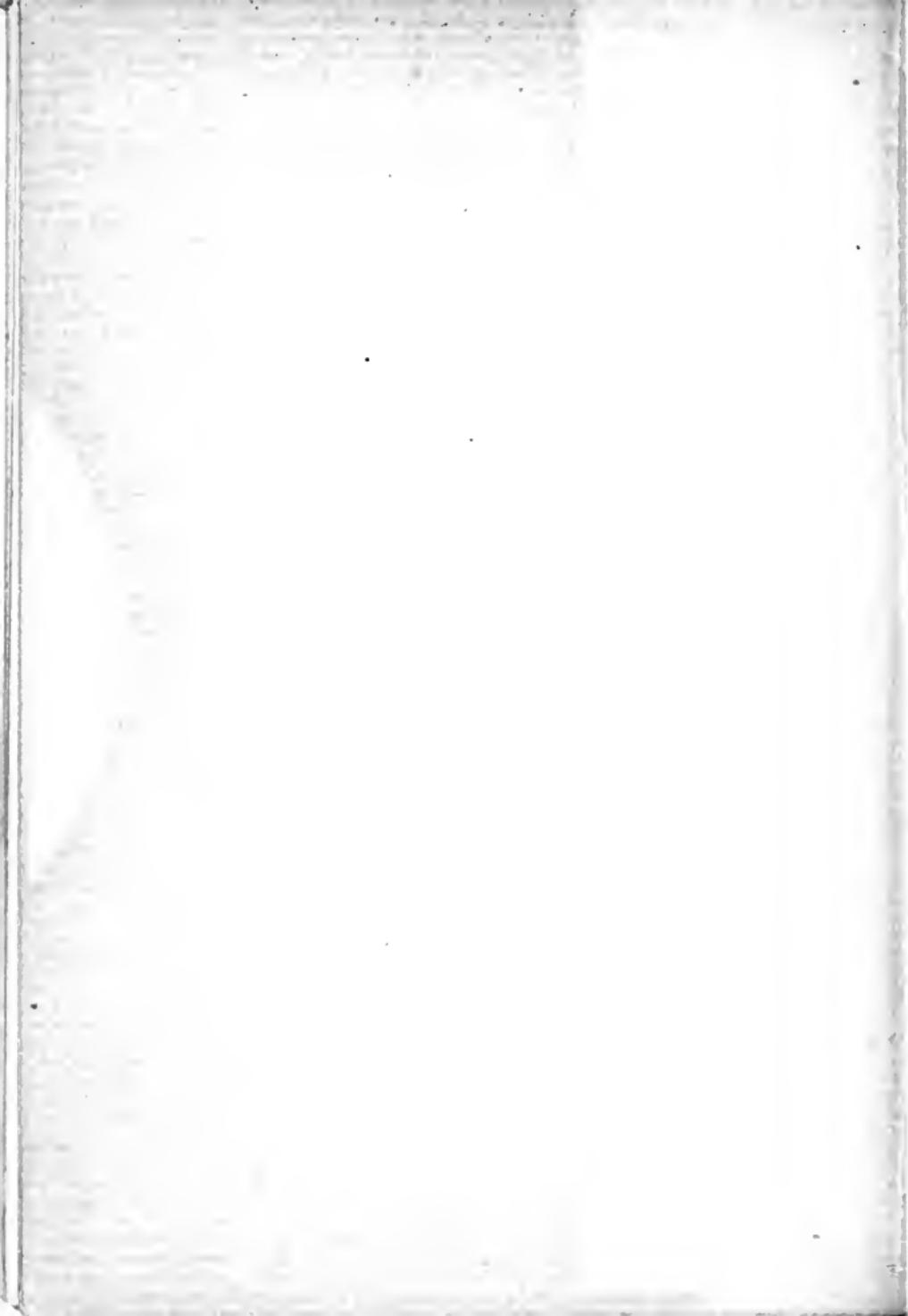
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